



Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition

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Testimony in Favor of Proposed House Bill 6194 and Proposed Senate Bill 52

Good Morning Sen. Maynard, Representative Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee. I am Debbi Newton, Legislative Liaison for the newly formed Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition. The CVMC is an organization of about 20 groups such as the National Guard Association of Connecticut, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, The Marine Corps Association, Association of the US Army and ESGR to name but a few. We held our first meeting in December and have organized to provide one voice here at the State Legislature as well as on Capitol Hill in Washington. We represent more than 400,000 Veterans, Retirees, Servicemembers and their families and survivors.

I am here today to speak in favor of two of the bills before you.

Proposed Senate Bill 52, An Act Naming the Route 8 Bridge and Overpass over Hull Street, Ansonia, the "Brigadier General Brian F. Phipps Memorial Bridge." BG Phipps served in Vietnam. He was a long time member of the Connecticut Army National Guard. BG Phipps' company commander in Vietnam once wrote in one of his efficiency reports that "2LT Phipps aggressively took command of the 3rd platoon in the middle of a firefight when the previous platoon leader was wounded. He immediately gained the confidence of his men by his decisive leadership during the remainder of the battle." BG Phipps brought that same leadership to the Connecticut National Guard and gained the same confidence of all whom he led. This is an honor that is well deserved.

Proposed House Bill 6194, An Act Naming the Bridge on the Route 72 Extension in Bristol in Memory of CSM Anthony V. Savino is a bill that the CVMC brought to Representative Nicastro for consideration and we are grateful that he has brought it to you. Command Sgt. Maj. Savino, known for his trademark cigar, was the most amazing man I have ever had the privilege to know and call a friend. But he was much more than that. He was a mentor, a leader, a disciplinarian, a Godfather. Yes, he was, and is still, known as "The Godfather" across the country and throughout the National Guard. Many of the young Soldiers in the Guard now who never even knew him are receiving the benefit of his mentorship and wise counsel from those of old-timers that received the benefit of his mentorship and wise counsel firsthand.

Tony was a tireless advocate for the rights and benefits of his Soldiers, whether they were Connecticut Guardsmen or from other states. He was a lifetime member of the National Guard Association of Connecticut and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the US among many others. At the last EANGUS Conference he attended, he was awarded The President's Award, the highest award that can be given. After all the other awards had been presented that evening, the presenter began by saying "And our final recipient of the night is." She stopped, and raised a cigar to her mouth. 1700 people from all 54 states and territories immediately were on their feet applauding CSM Anthony V. Savino...their Godfather. The award presenter never even had to read the reason he was receiving the award. There was no question in anyone's mind why he was receiving it.

After his retirement from the Guard, Tony remained active in Veterans' issues and his Soldiers' lives. He never forgot a Soldiers' name, their spouses' name or the names of their children. He was honored to have been inducted into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. In fact, the evening of the induction, against doctor's orders, he left his hospital bed where he was fighting another battle in his long war against cancer, to come to this very building and receive his medal in person. It meant that much to him.

I will never be able to tell you the impact he has had on my life, both professionally and personally. I am a better Soldier, a better mother, a better friend, a better advocate for the Soldiers and veterans Tony loved so much, a better person because of his mentorship, his love, his discipline, his kicks in my butt.

This is one honor, in his hometown, that will last for generations, that will continue to have people wonder who is was, people who will research him, ask questions about him, and who will, undoubtedly continue to be mentored by The Godfather.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of these two bills. If you have any questions, I am available.

Sincerely,

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